

# Archaeological watching brief, Culmore, Sandhead, Dumfries and Galloway

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January 2016



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- 1 Introduction
- 2 Background
- 3 Project Works
- 4 Results
- 5 Conclusion
- 6 Appendix 1 - Record Summaries
- 7 Appendix 2 – site photographs
- 8 Appendix 2 - Discovery & Excavation in Scotland 12

# **ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF, CULMORE, SANDHEAD, DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 An archaeological condition was placed on planning application 14/P/1/0676, the erection of a dwelling house and installation of a septic tank, soakaway and oil storage tank at Culmore, Sandhead, Dumfries and Galloway (NX 103 522 ). The condition required that no development should take place until the developer had secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, in the form of a watching brief to be undertaken during ground breaking works, which had been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority (in consultation with the Council Archaeologist).

1.2 E A Architecture, Glenluce, engaged John Pickin Archaeology and Heritage to prepare a Written Scheme of Investigation and undertake the watching brief.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

2.1 There are a number of records of archaeological finds from the Culmore area. These are mainly antiquarian reports of prehistoric stone tools and lithic working debris collected from the ridge of higher ground where the farmstead stands (Dumfries and Galloway HER references MDG1371, MDG1373, MDG1375, MDG13002). These finds include a large amount of worked and struck flint and a number of retouched tools including arrowheads and two stone axe-hammers. These artefacts date primarily to the Neolithic and Bronze Age and indicate considerable prehistoric activity in the locality.

2.2 Given the relatively high level of prehistoric material from the immediate area there was an expectation that additional material and associated archaeological features might be found during ground breaking works associated with the development.

2.3 Examination of historic maps indicated that the development site had been an enclosed field or paddock for some considerable time. The First Edition Ordnance Survey six-inch map of 1847 (Wigts Sheet 22) shows the site within a small enclosure immediately south of Culmore farm with a garden area to the east. A similar layout is depicted on the 1893 OS map (Sheet XXIII NW). The 1906 OS map (Sheet XXIII NW) shows a small intake at the south west corner of the enclosure but no other changes.

## **3 PROJECT WORKS**

3.1 The watching brief was carried out on 18 January 2016. An area approximately 25m x 35m was machine stripped and all ground works were monitored for archaeological features and material (Figs. 1 – 3).



Contains Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright and database right 2014

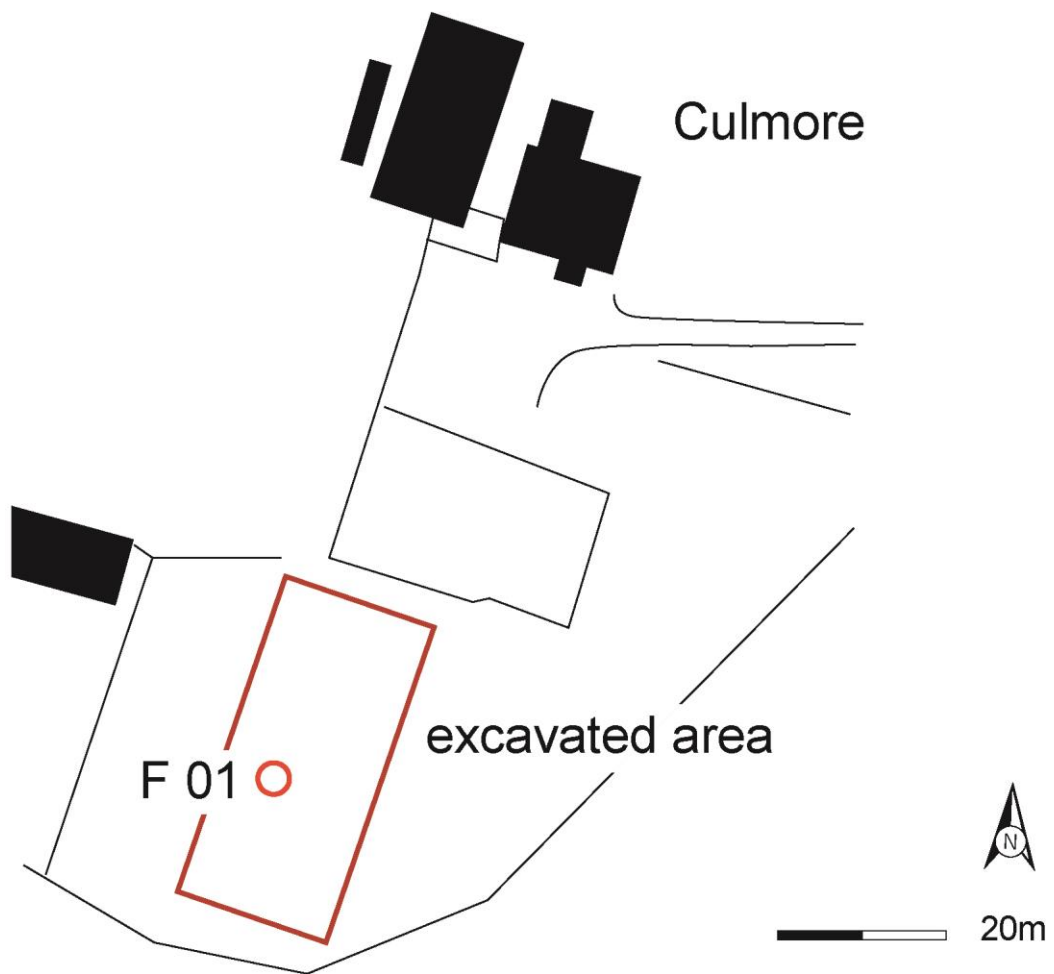


Fig 1. Site location



*Fig 2. Pre-excitation view.*



*Fig 3. Site during machine excavation.*



*Fig 4. Pre-excitation view of F01 from NE.*



*Fig 5. SW facing section of F01.*

## **4 RESULTS**

4.1 A top soil layer, some 0.30m deep, overlay a relatively flat natural deposit of mixed glacial sand and gravel with occasional pebbles of corticated flint.

4.2 Running approximately north-east to south-west close to the western edge of the excavated area was the disturbed line of a shallow field drain. This sat principally within the top soil zone and comprised broken unglazed semi-circular clay drain pipes with flat bases. These machine-made drains are typically mid to late nineteenth century in date.

4.3 At NX 10314 52097 there was single pit feature F 01 (fig 4). It was circular in plan with a diameter of 0.80m and had been cut into a natural deposit of orange gravel.

4.4 The feature was half-sectioned (Figs 5 – 6). It had a maximum depth of 0.22m with a gently sloping side to the north-west and a steep side to the south-east. It contained a fill of grey sand and fine gravel with occasional water-rolled stone cobbles (03) that was sealed to the south by a layer of fine sand and gravel with occasional water-rolled cobbles (02); this deposit also contained small charcoal fragments and had a grey-black colour from charcoal staining.

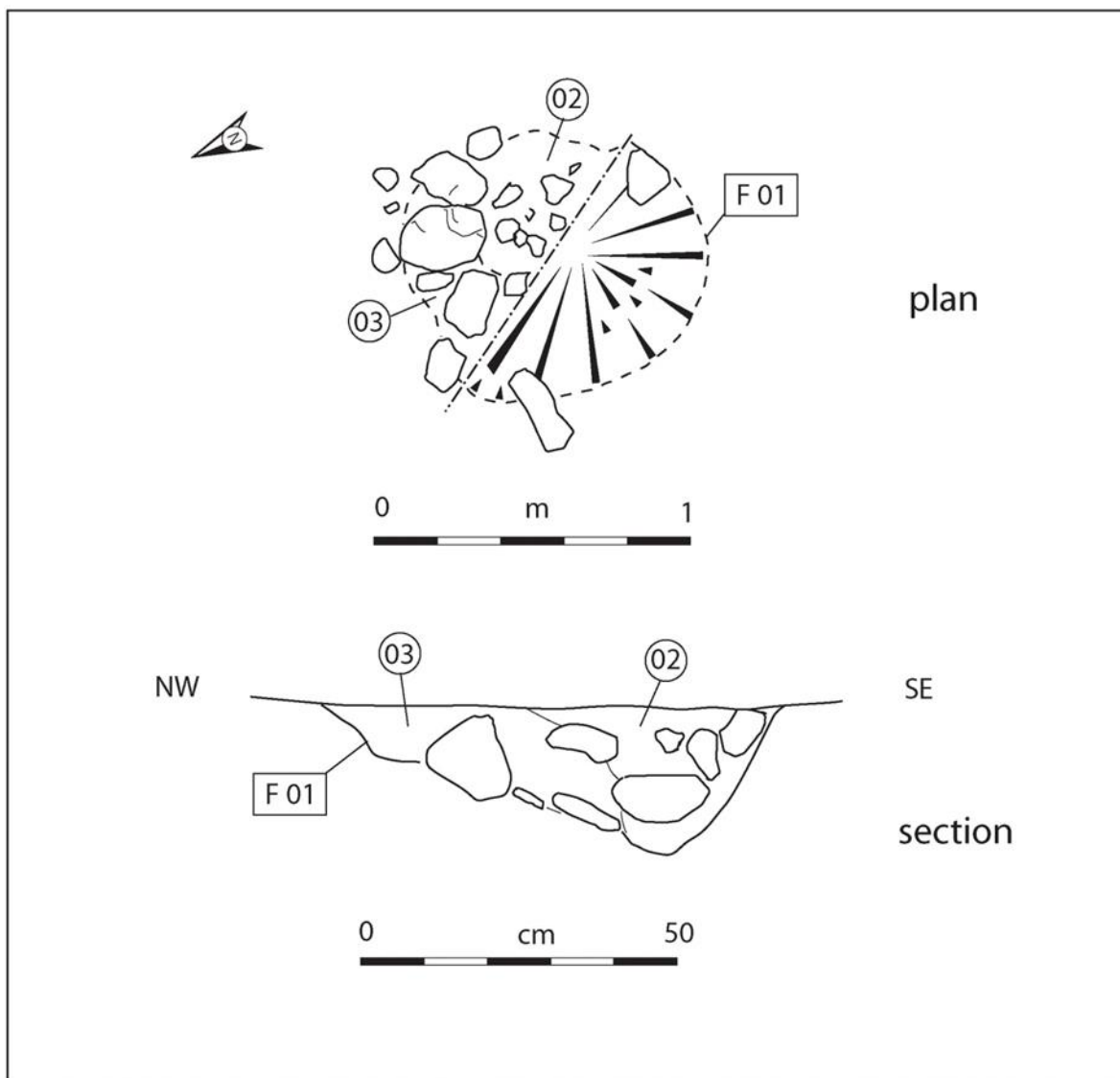


Fig 6. Plan and section of F01.

4.5 No artefacts were found within the pit feature but a fragment of burnt clay or daub (5 x 3 cm) was recovered from the surface. It could not be established if this material related to the fill of the pit or derived from the top soil. The clay/daub fragment is essentially undatable and could be prehistoric or later.

## 5 CONCLUSION

5.1 With the exception of the Victorian field drain the only archaeological feature revealed during the ground works was a circular pit with a fill of sand, charcoal and small stones. The pit may have been truncated by later agricultural activity and its original form, function and date cannot be established.

5.2 Although flint pebbles occurred within the natural sand and gravel deposits on the site there was no evidence for any struck or worked flint.

## 6 APPENDIX 1 - Record Summaries

F01	Circular pit (0.80m maximum diameter x 0.22m deep) cut into natural sand and gravels. Filled with layers 02 and 03.
02	Fine sand and gravel, stained by charcoal, with occasional water-rolled stone cobbles and charcoal fragments. Fills the southern section of F01 and overlies 02.
03	Grey sand and fine gravel with occasional water-rolled stone cobbles. Fills northern section of F01 and overlain by 02.

## 7 APPENDIX 2 – Site Photographs (digital images in site archive)

Photo no.	Description	Taken from	Date
Cul 01	General view of site before ground works.	SW	18.01.2016
Cul 02	General view of site during machine excavation.	SW	“
Cul 03	Pre-excavation view of F01	NE	“
Cul 04	Pre-excavation view of F01 in relation to rest of site.	SW	“
Cul 05	Half section view of F01 showing SW facing side.	SW	“
Cul 06	Line of broken field drain.	SE	“
Cul 07	Burnt clay/daub from surface of F01		“

## 8 APPENDIX 3 – Entry for Discovery & Excavation in Scotland 2016

Local authority: Dumfries and Galloway

Parish: Stoneykirk

Site name: Culmore

Name of contributor: John Pickin

Type of project: watching brief

Name of organisation:

NGR: NX 103 522

Report: A watching brief was undertaken during ground breaking works for a new building at Culmore farm. The only archaeological feature observed during this work was a circular pit, 0.80m wide and 0.22m deep, cut into the natural sand and gravel with a mixed fill of fine sand and gravel and some charcoal. The pit may have been truncated by later agricultural activity and its original form, function and date could not be established.

Location of report: DGC HER; RCAHMS

Funder: EA Architecture, Design + Planning

Contact details of organisation: High Weirston House, Leswalt, Stranraer DG9 0RQ